Brill's New Paulys entry for "Medea"

(Μήδεια/*Mēdeia*, Lat. Medea). Born in Aea/Colchis (M. Αἰαίη: Apoll. Rhod. 3,1136) as the daughter of Aeetes, who was the son of Helios and the brother of Circe, and the Oceanid Idyia (Hes. Theog. 956ff., 992ff., Apollod. 1,129) or Hecate (Diod. Sic. 4,45,3). Sister of Chalciope [2] and Apsyrtus [1] (Apollod. 1,83.132), betrothed to Styrus (Val. Fl. 5,257f.), wife of Jason [1] and by him the mother of Medeius (Hes. Theog. 1001) or Mermerus and Pheres (Apollod. 1,146). Subsequently she is the wife of Aegeus and mother of Medus (Apollod. 1,147). On the Isles of the Blessed she became the spouse of Achilles [1] (Apollod. Epit. 5,5; Ibycus fr. 291; Sim. fr. 558 PMG; Lycoph. 174; Apoll. Rhod. 4,811ff.) [1].

M. is closely connected with the myth of the Argonauts. Made to fall in love with Jason by Hera with Aphrodite's help (Pind. P. 4,213ff.; schol. Eur. Med. 527; Apoll. Rhod. 3,7ff. 275ff.; Val. Fl. 6,455ff.). In return for a promise of marriage, M. supports him in performing the tasks given to him by Aeetes in order to obtain the Golden Fleece (Apollod. 1,129-131; Iason) and flees with him from Colchis. To hold up their pursuers, M. cuts up her brother Apsyrtus (Pherecydes FGrH 3 F 32; Apollod. 1,133 [2. 83ff.]; in Apoll. Rhod. 4,421ff. she lures him into a fatal trap). Because of Zeus' anger, M. and Jason must be absolved of the murder by Circe (Apollod. 1,134; Apoll. Rhod. 4,557ff.). M. is saved from being turned over to her pursuers by a ruse of Arete [1], the queen of the Phaiaces: the immediate marriage of M. to Jason (Apollod. 1,137f.; Apoll. Rhod. 4,1004ff.). M. overcomes the bronze giant Talos (Apollod. 1,140f.; Apoll. Rhod. 4,1638ff.).

After the return to Jason's home in Iolcus, M. avenges Hera (by convincing Pelias' daughters to commit patricide) (Apollod. 1,144; Soph. Rizotomoi fr. 534ff. TrGF 4; Eur. Peliades fr. 601ff. TGF) and Jason (whose parents and brothers had been driven to death by Pelias) (according to Nostoi fr. 7 PEG I; Ov. Met. 7,162ff., M. rejuvenates Aeson [1], in Pherecydes FGrH3 F 113, Sim. fr. 548 PMG Jason). Thereupon, Acastus banishes M. and Jason from Iolcus (Apollod. 1,14f.; Diod. Sic. 4,50ff.). Both go into exile in Corinth. M. bears Jason two sons.

This is where the early epics that still entered the mythographic collection of Pherecydes/Apollodonius attach: already Creophilus (PEG I 161: 7th cent. BC) fr. 9 knows of M. as the murderess of the Corinthian king Creon [2], her flight without her children and Jason to Athens (cf. Hdt. 7,62,1: pre-Euripidean [3. 114 n. 1]), pointing at her falling out with Jason presumably because of his liaison with the king's daughter, the slaying of the children by the Corinthians and the rumour of M.'s infanticide (cf. Apollod. 1,145f.). The Corinthian epic poet Eumelus [5] (PEG I 108: 8th cent. BC) even made Aeetes a Corinthian by birth (fr. 3; Pind. O. 13,53f.), so that M. as the heiress to the throne could go with Jason from Iolcus to Corinth (fr. 5; Sim. fr. 545 PMG; Apollod. 1,145f.). However, since no Corinthian descendants of Jason and M. other than Mermerus and Pheres are documented, the epic had to eliminate the two brothers from Corinth: Thus, the children perish during M.'s attempt (or Hera's, out of gratitude for M. rejecting Zeus' advances, schol. Pind. O. 13,74g) to make them immortal in the temple of Hera Acraea [2] (Eumelus fr. 5 PEG). Another version claims that the Corinthians killed the children, who were left by M. in the temple when she fled (Apollod. 1,146; Parmeniscus schol. Eur. Med. 264; cf. Eur. Med. 1379ff.). M. flees from Corinth on the snake-drawn chariot of her grandfather Helios (Apollod. 1,147). In Athens she

becomes the wife of Aegeus and mother of Medos (Apollod. 1,147; cf. Eur. Med. 663ff.; in Diod. 4,54,7 M. flees to Hercules in Thebes). After the failed attempt to murder Theseus, the son of Aegeus (Eur. Aegeus fr. 1ff. TGF), M. returns with Medos to her homeland, where she reinstalls Aeetes as ruler after killing Perses (Apollod. 1,147) and names the Medians after herself (Hdt. 7,62,1). After her earthly existence, M. as a goddess becomes the wife of Achilles in the Islands of the Blessed (Apollod. Epit. 5,5).

M. is a creation for the Thessalian Argonaut myth [4. 18ff.]. Her nature is explained by her origin in Colchis, the land of sorcery *par excellence*, and by the fact that descent from Helios is generally associated with magic. Homer fashioned his Circe after M. (Str. 1,2,40). The fairy tale of the king's daughter who helps the foreign youth against her own father [2. 149ff.; 5. 167; 6. 325ff.] underlies even the earliest version only to a limited extent because M. merely serves as a tool of Hera's revenge on Pelias there (there is no animosity between the latter as the legitimate ruler and Jason: Pherecydes FGrH 3 F 105; Apollod. 1,109; Pind. P. 4,250; Apoll. Rhod. 3,66ff. 1134ff.; schol. Eur. Med. 527 [4. 12ff.]) and because M. is a goddess herself (Hes. Theog. 956ff., fr. 376; Alcm. fr. 163 PMG; Apollod. 1,129; Musaeus 455 F 2 [7. 234f.]), whose relationship with a mortal is evident in the son Medeius named after her [4. 25ff.] and who lives in Elysium after her earthly existence. Neither can a '*M. initiatrix*' [2. 39ff.] and a founding heroine [2. 71ff.] or prophetess/muse M. [2. 103ff.] be documented, because in Pind. P. 4 M. only foretells the founding of Cyrene in Delphi's stead [4.262f.].

There is no literary evidence for splitting the M. character into a Thessalian (or Aeaeian-Colchian) and a Corinthian heroine [1. 48ff.], whose place was then taken by an infanticidal Hera as a '*reproductive demon*' and it is also superfluous [2. 57ff.]. The relocation of M., who was associated with Hera from the beginning, to Corinth was favoured by the cult of Hera Acraea and her temple legend of the graves of two times seven heroes there [2. 46ff.; 5. 173ff.; 7. 230f., 240ff., 322f.] as well as by the Helios cult [8. 64].

The infanticide was introduced to the Attic stage by Neophron (TrGF 1 no. 15) and (according to Dicaearchus fr. 63 Wehrli; Aristot. fr. 635) after him especially by Euripides (Med. 1271ff.), from where it entered inseparable from M.'s name into Roman (Sen. Med. 969ff.; Val. Fl. 5,442ff.; but cf. Ov. Met. 7,1-424; Ov. Epist. 12) and world literature [2. 297ff.; 6; 9], including Christa Wolf's novel [10]. On M. in art, see [1. 56-64; 2. 253ff.; 10. 127ff.; 11; 12. 91-100; 13; 14].

Argonauts; Euripides [1] (B. 2.; D. 2.)

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